



AP[®] Summer Institute
Exam Materials

2013 AP English Literature and Composition

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ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

Carefully read the following poem by Mary Oliver. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how Oliver conveys the relationship between the tree and family through the use of figurative language and other poetic techniques.

The Black Walnut Tree

My mother and I debate:
we could sell
the black walnut tree
Line to the lumberman,
5 and pay off the mortgage.
Likely some storm anyway
will churn down its dark boughs,
smashing the house. We talk
slowly, two women trying
10 in a difficult time to be wise.
Roots in the cellar drains,
I say, and she replies
that the leaves are getting heavier
every year, and the fruit
15 harder to gather away.
But something brighter than money
moves in our blood—an edge
sharp and quick as a trowel
that wants us to dig and sow.
20 So we talk, but we don't do
anything. That night I dream
of my fathers out of Bohemia
filling the blue fields
of fresh and generous Ohio
25 with leaves and vines and orchards.
What my mother and I both know
is that we'd crawl with shame
in the emptiness we'd made
in our own and our fathers' backyard.
30 So the black walnut tree
swings through another year
of sun and leaping winds,
of leaves and bounding fruit,
and, month after month, the whip-
35 crack of the mortgage.

"The Black Walnut Tree" from *Twelve Moons* by
Mary Oliver, copyright © 1979 by Mary Oliver.
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2013 AP English Literature Scoring Guide

Question #1: Oliver, "The Black Walnut Tree"

General Directions: This scoring guide will be useful for most of the essays that you read, but in problematic cases, please consult your table leader. The score that you assign should reflect your judgment of the quality of the essay as a whole—its content, style, and mechanics. **Reward the writers for what they do well.** The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by one point above the otherwise appropriate score. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than a three (3).

9-8 These essays offer a persuasive analysis of Oliver's use of figurative language and other poetic techniques to convey her ideas about the relationship between the tree and family. The writers of these essays offer a range of interpretations; they provide convincing readings of both the ideas and Oliver's use of figurative language and other poetic techniques. They demonstrate consistent and effective control over the elements of composition in language appropriate to the analysis of poetry. Their textual references are apt and specific. Though they may not be error-free, these essays are perceptive in their analysis and demonstrate writing that is clear and sophisticated, and in the case of a nine (9) essay, especially persuasive.

7-6 These essays offer a reasonable analysis of Oliver's use of figurative language and other poetic techniques to convey her ideas about the relationship between the tree and family. They are less thorough or less precise in their discussion of the ideas and Oliver's use of figurative language and other poetic techniques, and their analysis of the relationship between the two is less thorough or convincing. These essays demonstrate the writer's ability to express ideas clearly, making references to the text, although they do not exhibit the same level of effective writing as the 9-8 papers. Essays scored a seven (7) present better developed analysis and more consistent command of the elements of effective composition than do essays scored a six (6).

5 These essays respond to the assigned task with a plausible reading of Oliver's use of figurative language and other poetic techniques to convey her ideas about the relationship between the tree and family, but tend to be superficial in their analysis of the ideas and of figurative language and other poetic techniques. They often rely on paraphrase, which may contain some analysis, implicit or explicit. Their analysis of the relationship of the ideas or of Oliver's use of figurative language and other poetic techniques may be vague, formulaic, or minimally supported by references to the text. There may be minor misinterpretations of the poem. These writers demonstrate some control of language, but their essays may be marred by surface errors. These essays are not as well conceived, organized, or developed as 7-6 essays.

4-3 These lower-half essays fail to offer an adequate analysis of the poem. The analysis may be partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant, or may ignore Oliver's ideas about the relationship between the tree and family or her use of figurative language and other poetic techniques. Evidence from the poem may be slight or misconstrued, or the essays may rely on paraphrase only. The writing often demonstrates a lack of control over the conventions of composition: inadequate development of ideas, accumulation of errors, or a focus that is unclear, inconsistent, or repetitive. Essays scored a three (3) may contain significant misreading and/or demonstrate inept writing.

2-1 These essays compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4-3 range. Although some attempt has been made to respond to the prompt, the writer's assertions are presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the poem. These essays may contain serious errors in grammar and mechanics. They may offer a complete misreading or be unacceptably brief. Essays scored a one (1) contain little coherent discussion of the poem.

0 These essays give a response that is completely off topic or inadequate; there may be some mark or a drawing or a brief reference to the task.

-- These essays are entirely blank.

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E1

In "The Black Walnut Tree", Mary Oliver centers the poem around the black walnut tree to show the contrast between practicality and sentimentality. In lines 1-15, the use of direct dialogue conveys the practical motivations behind selling the tree, which is in contrast with more abstract and figurative descriptions of thoughts, feelings, and dreams that present the sentimental value of the tree as a ~~the~~ symbolic representation of the family tree. Seen in how the tree endures in lines 30-35 establishes Oliver's central argument about the invaluable nature of sentiment and the endurance of family.

In the first fifteen lines, Oliver's use of language is very literal, conveying a run of the mill conversation to ~~the~~ ^{consider} the practical benefits of selling the tree. Immediately, the offer is presented to "sell the black walnut tree to the lumberman" (24). Though the tree has not yet been ascribed any value, the fact that there is ongoing debate suggests it offers something that is not yet apparent. The complaints of how "the leaves are getting heavier every year, and the farm harder to gather away" (11-15), suggest that the tree has become a burden to maintain and take care of, and perhaps it ought to go towards a practical cause such as to "pay off the mortgage" (5). The ~~the~~ narration of ~~the~~ the dialogue throughout lines 1-15 is significant in how the women are only conversing verbally and the fact that they are talking "slowly" (9) suggests there is something deeper on their minds than



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E2

money or upkeep. The description of the two women as "trying ~~to be~~ in a difficult time to be wise" (9-10) presents the central conflict within the poem with regards to what it means to make the wise decision and the right decision between what is practical and what is abstractly and subtly meaningful.

In contrast with the first fifteen lines, the shift in the focus of description from dialogue to thoughts, emotions and visions in lines 16-29 ~~signifies~~ signifies the importance the tree holds as a symbol of family. ~~and~~ Immediately, the reformation of the value of money is seen in how "something brighter than money moves in our blood" (16-17), ~~indicating that their instincts to keep the tree is something that runs through their very veins straight from the heart, providing a strong emphasis on sentiment.~~ This feeling, described as having "an edge sharp and quick as a towel" (17-18), is representative of their innate nature that compels them to want to "dry and sew" (19). Clearly, the tree holds a significant symbolic value to the family, and the image of the speaker's "fathers out of Arkansas" (22) toiling in nature associates the black walnut tree with that of their family tree. In both, the leaves do get heavier each year, but it is this very fact that gives the tree its meaning. If it were to be suddenly gone, the speaker freely admits she and her mother would "crawl with shame in the emptiness we'd made in our own and our fathers' backyard" (27-29)



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E3

This word that is described, ~~the~~ essentially the emptiness without such a tree, is an absence of familial ties. Without the black walnut tree, the ties and memories back to their fathers and their fathers' fathers suddenly becomes lost in time and it is this significance that easily outweighs any practical benefits in the form of money or convenience that its removal would entail.

In the closing lines 30-35, the enduring presence of the tree signifies the speaker and his mother's decision and reveals Oliver's larger message of the importance and strength of family. In the first fifteen lines, the two women were speaking blandly and only with their rational mind, whereas in the next fourteen lines, they began remembering, imagining and feeling and though there was talk, it doesn't lead to "anything" (21). This contrast highlights the ~~the~~ necessity of being able to contemplate family with the instincts of the heart. The love and toil of generations past is something that goes far beyond rationality or practicality, and is profoundly human and emotional. The closing lines of how the tree, and by extension, the family endures through "suns and lapping winds" (32) and the "whipcrack of the mortgage" (34-35) convey the resilience of the family and the wisdom of their decision in a difficult time.

In "The Black Walnut Tree", Oliver's use of ~~structure~~ presents the contrast between the practicality of selling



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E4

off ~~the~~ the black walnut tree and the central importance of retaining it in its symbolic representation as their family tree. Its lasting endurance at parent ends signifies the importance of sentiment and emotions and highlights Oliver's overarching message that practical things, such as money or convenience pale in comparison to the importance of family.

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FI

In her poem, *The Black Walnut Tree*, Mary Oliver contrasts the practical needs of a family with the emotional bonds that are equally necessary to hold people together. In illustrating this conflict, Oliver ~~develops~~ develops two images of the relationship between the family and the tree, a literal relationship ^{between} ~~of~~ two women and a valuable piece of property, and an allegorical relationship where the tree stands in as the critical thread tying together the family. Through use of imagery, simile, symbolism, and diction, Oliver shows that the relationship between the family and the tree transcends pragmatism, and truly represents the beautiful and infinite connections that hold together a family even against the trials of time.

As the poem begins, ~~Oliver~~ ^{the women} attempt to envision the tree as another possession, which can be easily destroyed. Oliver uses the imagery of the "dark boughs" and "smashing" of heavy branches against their home to evoke a feeling of fear. In practical terms, the tree is developed as a dangerous and unfriendly resident. The characters attempt to slowly build up the will to cut down the tree using parallel structure. They list the dangers of the tree one by one, "roots in the cellar drains", along with "heavier" ^{knives,} that threaten their ability to survive as a family. At the literal level, the family sees the tree as a potential threat, attempting to justify ~~the decision to cut the tree down~~ cutting




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F2

down the tree by appealing to the practical implications of keeping the tree. In this sense, Oliver develops the tree as a simply another ~~thing~~ worry that the family can easily do away with.

Yet the fact that the women are ultimately unable to destroy the unwelcome resident demonstrates the deep importance of the tree, as a mark of their family history and as a member of their family. Oliver ~~deep~~ implies that their connection to the tree is almost loving when she notes that they had "an edge" that "moves in [their] blood." The tree, ~~is a symbol~~ is symbolically, is impossible to cut down because it is a part of them, and a part of their blood. The tree forges the family together against the continual wage of time, which Oliver describes through the metaphorical "whip-crack" of the mortgage ~~out the~~ as the family "swings through another year." The tree, against adversity and practical concerns, has become ~~symbol~~ a symbol of their family, which swings on through difficult seasons on the brink of bankruptcy. At a deeper level, the tree stands in for not only the principle of family, the "something brighter than money," but also for the women's connection to the father. Just as the father exists in the natural realm of "bluefields" and "fresh and generous Ohio," the tree is a small reminder of that wild world. As it digs its roots



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1 F3

under their house, it also is a piece of their father, a replacement for the "emptiness" that would come if they were to throw out ^{their memories} the tree. The tree, along with the family, "[bounds]" through the years based on strong ^{family} connections and a powerful love. The tree thus lives in two realms, a literal realm and an allegorical realm. While on the surface the tree appears to be a danger to the family, it is also a critical part of the family, holding them together in an unrelenting world. The tree, standing in for the father, is a loved member of the family.



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B-1

The importance of family. This element is very clearly seen in Mary Oliver's poem "The Black Walnut Tree". As only having a mother present in her life, a daughter, the narrator, must help her mother make a difficult financial decision on whether or not to keep a black walnut tree that they have in their backyard. ~~This tree represents a connection of~~ This tree is a connector of generations for both the narrator and her mother.

Like with any difficult decisions, the mother and daughter explore both the benefits and disadvantages to cutting down this tree. They "debate" (Oliver line 1) and "talk slowly, ... trying in a difficult time to be wise" (line 10). Using these verbs to describe their conversations, Oliver makes it clear that this is not an easy decision and they may not see eye-to-eye on what the right thing to do is. They both have reasons to sell, "roots in the cellar drain" (line 11) and "fruit harder to gather away" (line 15), but yet as they are talking, they are not satisfied with these reasons. This shows that the affection they have for the tree is not superficial. There is a deeper meaning that this tree holds in each of their lives. Although they could "pay off the mortgage" (line 5)



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B-2

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with the money they would receive, it would not satisfy the importance that this black walnut tree has within their family.

Line 15 holds a clear shift in the poem, especially in beginning the line with the word "But". Oliver uses this as a way to begin a new aspect element of the poem, the highlighted element of family. The conversation between the mother and daughter changes from ^{discussing} advantages of selling to reminiscing about the memories associated with the tree. ~~that~~

"An edge sharp and quick as a trowel that wants us to dig and sow" (lines 17-19). Oliver uses this simile to show the duo's desire to persevere and dig deep so that they can stay both financially ~~stable~~ and emotionally stable.

Both

The mother and daughter have "something brighter than money in our blood" (line 16-17). They have love. Not only do they ~~most~~ have a good relationship between the two of them, it ~~can be inferred~~ is implied that they are the only family for each other. Without a solid male head of the household, the mother ~~would~~ ^{is} be making all of the tough decisions. Most likely a widow, she has the desire to prove to everyone that she is a strong woman and independent; she also has the desire to be a good role model to her daughter.



Both the mother and daughter know that they would have a feeling of remorse if they cut down and sold the tree, as Oliver describes that they would "crawl with shame in the emptiness" (line 27). This is not only their backyard, but it was "our fathers' backyard" (line 29) as well. This line clearly ~~now~~ makes the tree the connector of generations. It is a spinoff of a literal family tree in that the black walnut tree metaphorically connects the three generations represented in the poem. There is an element of the passage of time in the last few lines, but it is also one of assurance in that the tree "swings through another year... month after month, the whipcrack of the mortgage" (lines 31, 35). The ~~turn~~ author ends with the assurance that the family and tree will "survive" and be financially and emotionally stable.

This was a very hard decision, because of the importance of the mortgage, but for the family, the connections that the black walnut tree makes are greater than the financial struggle they may face with their mortgage.

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Question 1 H-1

"The Black Walnut tree/swings through another year," in Mary Oliver's "The Black Walnut Tree." The tree represents a family from its "roots" to its "boughs" stretching forwards against the "sun and leaping winds." By using such figurative language and poetic devices as symbolism and imagery the poet conveys the relationship of the tree and family. The tree is first described as a profit; money needed to pay the "mortgage." In the end the "Black Walnut Tree" still stands in the "backyard," month by month, year by year.

The speaker hints that the family's future is low with "difficult times" symbolizing the desperate nature of the matter as the "two women" are "trying... to be wise." Symbolism also appears in the speaker's statement, "but something brighter than money moves in our blood," ~~meaning~~ symbolizing love is stronger than money. Also, it symbolizes the pride of heritage with the lines "my father's out of Bohemia", and, "crawl with shame in the emptiness we'd made in our own and our father's backyard." Like the tree whose "roots" are "in the cellar drains" the family's roots are in the "backyard" reaching out. "The whip-crack of the mortgage," is tied to that which the tree undergoes endures every year but this item is symbolic because the family bears the burden of "mortgage" not the tree. The tree is the family in that it undergoes tremendous strain.



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Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam. H-2

Imagery is seen throughout comparing the "leaves are getting heavier / every year, and the fruit harder to gather away" to the imagery of "two women" trying to lessen the weight of debt while knowing any profits are hard to find. The tree fights against the "storm" as "the women" "falk" trying to "dig" themselves out but both "don't do anything" to stop the constant thrash of their opposers. The "tree swings through another year" like the pendulum of time as the family continues to feel "the whip-crack of the mortgage." Imagery itself in the poem illustrates a ~~restless~~ restless nature of both the "tree" and the family. Both are grounded by "roots" trying to bear as much "fruit" as possible. The speaker express a dream she had "of my fathers cut of Bohemia / filling the blue fields of fresh and generous Ohio / with leas and vines and orchards"; creating an image of what one may assure is what she believes is paradise.

By using symbolism and imagery the poet illustrates an intricate relationship between an old "Black Walnut Tree" to "two women" both rooted deep in the Earth and past trying to reach for the "sun" and the "fruit" it will bring. Symbolism creates the allusion that the "tree" is the family both old



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H-3

and new. Imagery portrays the image that the tree and family are linked by common trials and burdens. The relationship between the "tree" and the family is one of respect and admiration. In their "blood" "moss" something much more powerful than "money"... "Love."

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1

C-1

In "The Black Walnut Tree," Mary Oliver conveys the importance of heritage through use of first person point-of-view and symbolism.

The first person point-of-view in Oliver's poem emphasizes the personal relationship the speaker and her family have with the tree. The speaker and her mother begin the poem by trying to rationalize "selling the black walnut tree" (2-3) which has grown in their "backyard" (29) for generations. Instead of building a logical argument, impassionately determining the fate of the tree and the "mortgage" (5), the speaker and her mother relay emotional ideas and rationalizations for removing the tree. But the attached tone conveyed in ~~thereat~~ through the first person point-of-view makes it clear that the attachment of the family to the tree is a motivation "brighter than money" (16) and a desire to "pay off the mortgage" (5). The family heritage which is tied ~~between~~ in the trees roots is much more important, so, while the speaker and her mother "talk," they won't "do anything" (20-21); they are too wary of creating a terrible "emptiness" (28) if they were to remove the tree. The tree is a part of the family.

Oliver conveys the relationship between the growth of the tree and growth of the family



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~~It~~ through symbolism. The tree itself is a symbol for the family, which is why the speaker and her mother are so conflicted over the fate of the tree and ultimately decide to let it stand "month after month" (34). ~~Want the tree to fall, so would their~~ ~~family~~ Ostensibly, they are discussing a lone tree with "dark boughs" (7) and "roots in the cellar drain" (11), but, in actuality, they are discussing a family that, while fraught with conflict, as any family is, chooses to remain together and not give up. Just as the tree is a direct link to the family's heritage, planted by "fathers out of Bohemia" (22), it is a symbol of hope to the speaker's family's future. So long as this stands, so will we.

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Question 1

G-1

As humans, we value rhythm; consistency is our safe haven. We cherish tradition because it is cyclic and familiar, and that is comforting to us. In Oliver's poem, "The Black Walnut Tree", such ideas are reflected through the narrator's and her mother's reluctance to get rid of their tree. Through emphasis and imagery, Oliver conveys the all too familiar conflict between the struggle to have money, and yet still honor our spiritual ties with the past.

Money, and most specifically mortgage, ^{is} talked about often. They can sell the tree "and pay off the mortgage" (Line 5), or chop it down so the roots don't get "in the cellar drains" which would cost them money to remove. Finally at the end of the poem, Oliver says "So the walnut tree swings through another year... and, month after month, the whip-crack of the mortgage." Again with the mortgage, but this time with ~~the~~ a violent image: a whip-crack; they are slaves to the bank; slaves to the institution of money. And yet the tree remains, despite the fact that they are "~~conspicuous~~" in a difficult time" (Line 10). They are strapped for cash, but they don't make the decision to get rid of it, year after year.

The tree is almost sacred to them; they would

Line 30-35



Question 1

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"crawl with shame in the emptiness we'd made" (Line 27-28) if they got rid of the tree. The tree represents something "brighter than money" (Line 16) to them. The night after discussing to be rid of the tree, the narrator has a dream about her ancestors traveling to this land and becoming successful farmers. ~~see~~ (see line 21-25). That is what the tree represents: all that her family is and all that they have accomplished. This tree could crush their house (Line 7), or they could not be able to pay the mortgage, but they will never have the heart to get rid of it. It is their pride, and it is all they have left of what is and what was.

It is this belief and nostalgia that feed the conflict between the spiritually and physically rich.

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M-1

In the poem, "The Black Walnut Tree" by Mary Oliver, the family has a bond with the Walnut tree. Mary Oliver uses personification and imagery to convey the relationship with the family and the tree.

Oliver uses personification throughout the poem to help the readers imagine the bond the family shares with the Walnut tree.

For example, "But something brighter than money moves in our blood"; money does not move through the blood but this quote is stated as ~~as~~ because the family needs the money to for their house but they decide to keep the tree because it represents the father or husband that they have lost. "So the black walnut tree swings through another year of sun and leaping winds", is another example of personification. The "leaping winds" represents the mood of the poem and the tone.

Oliver also uses imagery to convey the family relationship between the family and the Walnut tree. Oliver used imagery to help the readers imagine the relationship with the tree. Throughout the poem the family debates



1

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam. M-2

On selling the walnut tree. The family decides not to sell this tree because it represents the father of the family. The author mentions other negative possibilities that could happen to the house if they do not sell this tree. For example, "Likely some storm anyway will churn down its dark boughs, smashing the house." The author added this imagery into this poem to add a negative possibility in keeping this tree. "churn down its dark boughs, smashing the house" can also symbolize the effect of the family when the father figure left the household. The author also uses other imagery, such as: "an edge sharp and quick as a trowel that wants us to dig and sow", is another example of imagery that provides a connection between the family and the tree.

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Question 1.

I-1

The Black Walnut Tree is a poem which symbolizes a tree to an entire family. This tree has been on this land for so long. The women are trying to decide if they should cut the tree down or let it live. As the women thinks about it she thinks of all the times that tree was there; growing with them. Although the tree has started to cause problems in the house mother cannot part from it yet.

Mother and Oliver symbolize the tree as many things through out the poem; blood or a nuisance. By symbolizing the tree as blood they say it is a part of the family. Almost like it has grown apart in their soul. The nuisance of the tree is that the roots are beginning to cause problems in the cellar. Finally they see the good over the bad.

Mother and Oliver talk about what they could do with the money they could get for the tree. They realize the tree means more to them than having the mortgage paid. This symbolizes they care for blood over money. Finally the reader can see this family cares more for the memories than free space.

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Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam. D-1

In this poem the family seems very conflicted about their relationship with this tree. It seems to cause them a lot of trouble with its heavy ^{leaves} ~~branches~~ roots in the cellar, ^{drains} and fruit harder to collect every year. Its also about to fall down in the next storm.

~~Yet as they say~~

They could just sell the tree to pay off the mortgage but "something brighter than money moves in our blood," The father planted that tree, he is currently in "generous Ohio" and they feel they would "crawl with shame if they sold the tree"

So the tree "swings" ~~in the~~ "leaping wind" despite the ~~whip crack~~ "whip crack of the mortgage."

#